

Paper I1

Myanmar report

Mission Committee

Basic information

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Action required	None.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Report on the partnership work between the URC and the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar (PCM) in the wake of the 2021 military coup.
Main points	Recent crisis donation Match-funded crisis appeal Ongoing partnership work.
Previous relevant documents	N/A.
Consultation has taken place with...	The Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries, former URC General Secretary John Proctor, the leadership of the PCM.

Summary of impact

Financial	All financial expenditure is contained within an existing ringfenced fund for the PCM.
External (eg ecumenical)	Active contribution to PCM Roundtable, facilitated by the Council for World Mission (CWM).

1. Partnership between the United Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar (PCM)

The United Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar have a long and close relationship (*URC webpage soon to be available*). In 2023-24, we sought to re-energise this partnership, which had lapsed during the pandemic, the 2021 coup and following personnel changes in both Churches.

With the help of former General Secretary, the Revd John Proctor, we were able to understand the background and history, and build on new connections with the PCM

leadership. This was greatly aided by two visits to Church House in 2023 from the PCM's General Secretary, the Revd Pek Muan Cuang. We were able to hear first hand about the challenges faced by the Church and the state, and explore new ways to partner with them. On the Revd Muan Cuang's first visit in June, he met with John and members of the General Secretariat and Mission team. As part of his second visit in November, he spent time with a range of people and projects in Cambridge, including Robert Pope at Westminster College, Nigel Uden and Alex Clare Young and the congregation at Downing Place, and Lythan Nevard, Moderator of Eastern Synod.

The PCM is responding strongly to the oppression and violence that has escalated since the military coup in February 2021. Its churches are predominantly in regions that continue to suffer regular shelling, destroying villages, including homes, churches and essential infrastructure. As a result, the churches are supporting thousands of displaced people with food and shelter, and establishing simple medical centres and primary schools. Many young men are caught up in the violence, either by joining the civil opposition (the People's Defence Force) or trying to avoid conscription into the army. The normal institutions of state have almost entirely ceased: healthcare, education (including universities), the justice system. This is having a devastating impact on civil society, now and for the future. We have heard many heartbreaking personal stories.

The Church, meanwhile, continues to look to the future, pushing on with an ambitious project to relocate and expand its Agape Hospital, supported by the Council for World Mission and other Church partners: www.cwmission.org/cwm-organises-working-grouping-meeting-for-agape-hospital-relocation-project-in-myanmar/#:~:text=Established%20by%20the%20Presbyterian%20Church,under%2Dserved%20by%20medical%20facilities.

2. The PCM's priorities

- Continuing to provide food and shelter for displaced people
- Building on the work of churches to offer schooling and medical centres
- Rebuilding churches and homes in shelled villages
- Pastoral support for young men who have fled to the cities
- Peace work with all parties.

3. The URC's work

- Regular participation in a CWM-hosted partners' Roundtable, to hear news and updates
- Participation in a WhatsApp group to hear immediate and urgent news for prayer support
- An initial £10,000 crisis grant in May 2024 from a historical fund
- A page on the URC website to raise awareness among our churches (*this will be available soon*)
- A two-week series of Daily Devotions (3-15 June) written by a wide range of UK and global friends and partners to raise awareness and prayer support
- A fundraising campaign, match-funded, to our local congregations to enable them to support the crisis work of the PCM (launch June 2024)
- Early conversations to support the PCM in their peace work.

4. Appeal to General Assembly

We ask members of General Assembly to pray for our friends in the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar, and support the ongoing work of the URC for this partnership, including the fundraising campaign.